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Die merkwürdigste Deutung hat das *Rauschen* gefunden. Ausgerechnet nach dieser Hinrichtungsscene sollen wie beim Anstieg zum Brocken 3881 ff. rauschende Bäche— hätten sie nicht auch die ganze Zeit her gerauscht?—Erinnerungen *jener Himmelstage* in Faust wach machen! Da könnte man doch, vorab nach den letzten Versen des Blutlieds, noch eher an das Rauschen des Blutbaches denken, der noch nicht verströmt sei. Viel näher liegt doch folgende Deutung. In den Lüften singen gierige Geister das Blutlied (später werden sie von Mephistopheles *eine Hexenzunft* genannt), sie freuen sich auf das neue Blutopfer. Das Volk drängt sich herum, Zeugen der kommenden Scene zu sein. Faust und Mephisto ersteigen darum einen Baum, von dem aus sie besser sehen können. Das Volk bespricht sich erregt: wird dies kindlichfröhliche Geschöpf wirklich die ganze Härte des Gesetzes zu erdulden haben oder wird der letzte Augenblick ihre Begnadigung bringen? Aber da naht die Unglückliche schon; sie schämt sich nicht, obwol sie völlig nackt; mit eben der sorglosen Lässigkeit, die man an ihr kannte, schreitet sie zum Blutgerüste; wo sie geht, glüht der Boden; der Kopf fällt; das Blut löscht das Feuer; Finsternis bedeckt die Scene, denn nun schwirren und rauschen sie heran die scheusslichen Gestalten, die sich immer dichter herzugedrängt hatten, deren Gesang immer gieriger geworden war. In der ersten Strophe des Blutlieds war allgemein von der zauberischen Kraft heissen Menschenbluts gesprochen, in der zweiten von Fällen, wo es vergossen wird. Um des geilen Blicks einer Dirne willen—Marlowes Ende!—, oder in der Trunkenheit fährt die Hand jach zum Messer, und das Blut strömt. Aber Menschenblut wird nur durch Menschenblut gesühnt, Blutschuld fordert immer neue Opfer; *über des Erschlagenen Stätte schweben rächende Geister, die auf den rückkehrenden Mörder lauern* (Urfaust 82, 55): nie rieselt ein Blutquell allein. Was die weiteren Strophen, die zweimal angeeutet werden, gebracht hätten, mag man sich an der Hand andrer Beispiele ausdenken. Ich weise noch auf Bürgers *Wilden Jaeger* hin, von dem Goethe durch Bürger selbst und Boie wusste, ob er auch viel später erst fertig geworden ist.—Aus dem Geschwätz scheusslicher Fratzengestalten vernimmt Faust, dass das, was er da eben mit ange-

sehen hat, Abbild grauenvoller Wahrheit ist: Gretchen war in dem Augenblick hingerichtet worden.

Nur noch eins: Wenn die Deutung, die ich oben für die Worte *Nackt das Idol usw.* vorge schlagen habe, richtig ist, dann weist dies Paralipomenon sehr weit zurück, in eine Zeit, wo die Gestalt Gretchens noch nicht die festen Züge angenommen hatte, die der Urfaust uns vorführt. Da ich anderseits einen genauen terminus post quem für die genannten Worte festlegen kann, so wird sich eine erneute Prüfung der Frage: war die Gretchentragödie bei Goethes Eintritt in Weimar im wesentlichen fertig? nicht umgehen lassen.

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#### THE SOURCE OF GRESSET'S *MÉCHANT*

The source of Gresset's *Méchant* has been assigned to various plays. As soon as it was produced, Fréron pointed out the similarity between it and the *Médisant* by Destouches.<sup>1</sup> La Harpe, in an article evidently written before 1789, claims that the plot was copied from the *Flatteur* by J. B. Rousseau.<sup>2</sup> He calls attention to the fact that the characters designated by the titles of the two comedies both wish to prevent the marriage of a friend; and in both cases it is the valet, won over by a maid, who unmasks the traitor. Petit de Julleville adds the *Petit maître corrigé* by Marivaux to the list of sources,<sup>3</sup> while Lenient indicates *Tartufe* as the model of the character of Cléon if not the source of the plot.<sup>4</sup> Wogue says that Gresset did not go to the trouble of imagining his plots, but borrowed the action of his plays from Molière. He called the *Méchant* a traditional subject: the combatted love affair.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lenient, *la Comédie au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1888, vol. 1, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> La Harpe, *Lycée ou cours de littérature ancienne et moderne*, Paris, 1818. Vol. 10, p. 303.

<sup>3</sup> Petit de Julleville, *le Théâtre en France*. Paris, 1901; p. 291.

<sup>4</sup> *loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Wogue, *J-B-L. Gresset*. Paris, 1892; p. 186.

The model of the character of Cléon was sought for among Gresset's contemporaries. Argenson says in his *Mémoires* (Dec. 21, 1747) that Cléon is a composite of Maurepas, the duc d'Ayen, and his own brother. The duc de Chaulnes, Forcalquier, and the duc de Choiseul have also been given the doubtful honor of having served as pattern.<sup>6</sup> It is quite possible that Gresset had one or more of these men in mind while he was writing his play. Also it is true that all of these plays mentioned show points of similarity, because none of them would have been written had not the *Tartufe* been an unfailing source of inspiration. However, the immediate source of Gresset's *Méchant* seems to be in still another play which also recalls Molière's comedy, namely, Congreve's *Double Dealer*. It may appear surprising to find the source of a French play in English Restoration comedy, which was itself so strongly influenced by French drama; yet in the case of Gresset our surprise is somewhat lessened if we remember the fact that his family was of English origin. "It is perhaps that origin," says Gazier, "which explains the English character of his first tragedy, *Edouard III*, and of his first comedy, *Sidney*." We may add that perhaps it helps to explain the English source of his *Méchant*, especially if it be remembered that he was a man of wide culture.

It is true that Gresset's knowledge and interest in English literature may not appear very extensive at first blush, if they are measured only by reference to English authors and things English in his works. He knew and admired Milton's works, for he mentions Milton in the same breath with Camoëns in his *Epître à ma muse*. He denies in the preface to *Edouard III* that the scene in which blood is shed on the stage is due to English influence.<sup>7</sup> No doubt he is sincere in making this statement; but it proves he was acquainted with English drama to some extent. In his play, *Sidney*, the scene is laid in England and he portrays a

character filled with a kind of *mal du siècle* and suicidal mania who may well be a forerunner of later romantic heroes. Thus Gresset was at least interested in the land of spleen; and he cried out against imitating English customs both in his *Réponse à Suard* and in the *Gazetin*. Therefore, while he does not make many references to English literature, he must have been in touch with it.

In what way, however, did he come in contact with Congreve's *Double Dealer*? He probably did not have access to a published translation, as this play does not appear to have been translated until 1775 by Peyron under the title *Le Fourbe*.<sup>8</sup> La Place included two of Congreve's plays in his *Théâtre anglais*, namely, *Love for Love* and the *Mourning Bride*. Of course, Gresset may have read the *Double Dealer* in the original. I have found no evidence as to whether he could read English or not. However that may be, one is struck by the coincidence that La Place was publishing these two plays of Congreve at the same time that Gresset seems to have been borrowing from the *Double Dealer*. The *Théâtre anglais* is dated 1745-1748. The date of the *Méchant* is 1747.<sup>9</sup> Also, Gresset was a constant frequenter of the hôtel de Chaulnes and must have met La Place there, since the latter was one of the intimate

<sup>6</sup> Cushing, *Pierre Le Tourneur*, New York, 1908, p. 86, note 1.

<sup>7</sup> The date of the *Méchant* is unquestionably April 27, 1747; but through a misprint the date April 27, 1745 is often given. This would make the *Méchant* prior to *Sidney*, which was produced May 3, 1745; and that is out of the question. This misprint dates back at least to 1802, and it occurs in the following editions of the play which have come to my notice. *Édition Nicolle*. Paris, 1802. (The date is corrected in the reprint of 1821). *Répertoire du Théâtre Français* par Petitot. Paris, 1817. Vol. 14. *Chefs-d'oeuvre des auteurs comiques*. Firmin-Didot. Vol. 5. Also the mistake occurs in the following critical works. Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature française*, Paris, 1902; p. 657 and p. 1133. Lintilhac, *La Comédie au dix-huitième siècle*, Paris, 1909, p. 293 and p. 485. Weiss, *Essais sur l'histoire de la littérature française*. Paris, 1891, p. 326. Gazier gives the correct date on page 508, but gives 1745 on page 512. (*Revue des cours et conférences*, 1910.)

<sup>8</sup> Wogue, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>9</sup> Herrenschand, *J-B-L. Gresset*, Murten, 1895, p. 182.

friends of M. and Mme. de Chaulnes.<sup>10</sup> Gresset was, therefore, in touch with a man who was extremely interested in Congreve; and the coincidence in dates takes on a new meaning. It is surely not too hazardous to conjecture that La Place may have brought the *Double Dealer* to Gresset's notice; and if Gresset could not read English, he may have explained the plot to him. He may only have aroused Gresset's interest in it; but at least we realize that Gresset could hardly escape knowing the play, and it is not quite so remarkable, under these circumstances, that he borrowed the plot of the *Méchant* from Congreve.

If we compare the casts of the two plays, we find the following correspondence between the *dramatis personae*. The *Double Dealer*, himself, is characterized by Congreve as "Maskwell, a Villain; pretended friend to Mellefont, gallant to Lady Touchwood, and in love with Cynthia." This character is the *Méchant* who, in turn, is a villain, pretended friend to Valère, gallant to Florise and in love with Chloé. Mellefont, "promised to and in love with Cynthia," is the counterpart of Valère, promised to and in love with Chloé, who corresponds to the English Cynthia. Lady Touchwood is at first in love with Mellefont in the *Double Dealer*, but she is afterward in love with Maskwell and becomes his coadjutress. This character is Gresset's Florise, who, though not in love with Valère at any time, is yet in love with Cléon and becomes his coadjutress in attempting to keep Chloé and Valère apart. Lord Touchwood and Sir Paul Plyant coalesce into the one character of Géronte. The degree of relationship is somewhat changed between Géronte and Chloé, he being her uncle, while in the *Double Dealer*, Sir Paul Plyant is Cynthia's father, and Touchwood is Mellefont's uncle. But as Touchwood first favors his nephew and then will hear no good of him, so Géronte first favors his young friend Valère, but becomes strongly prejudiced against him. Another point of similarity between these characters lies in the fact that Sir Paul Plyant, true to his name, is hen-pecked,

while Géronte, though not so ridiculous, weakens before Florise. (Act 1, sc. 1.) It cannot be said that Ariste has any prototype in the English comedy. He warns Valère against Cléon and this warning is delivered to Mellefont by Careless; but beyond that, the two have nothing in common. However, neither is of vital importance to the action. Lisette and Frontin are the stock soubrette and valet, inevitable in French comedy; and we need not look for their source in the English version. Of course, in Congreve's play there are other characters, but the main plot could be unfolded without them. Indeed, had the dramatist preserved the unity of action, practically none of them would have appeared.

Immediately after the curtain rises on the first act of the *Méchant*, we hear Lisette regret to Frontin that his master, Cléon, is preventing the marriage of Valère and Chloé in an underhanded way, while he pretends to favor it. This is the mainspring of the plots of both plays. Géronte informs Lisette that the marriage shall take place in spite of Florise, and that his fortune is promised to Chloé. Lisette replies that Florise will object, that she is in love with Cléon, and that she takes him as counsellor. The same situation arises in the *Double Dealer* with the exception that Lord Touchwood's money is promised to the young lover. On the other hand, Lady Touchwood takes Maskwell as counsellor, and is in love with him from the end of the first act.

In the second act of the *Méchant*, Cléon confesses that he is making love to both mother and daughter. He much prefers the daughter; and he believes it possible that Géronte may send Valère away, and that he may get the daughter and the money. In the *Double Dealer* (Act 5, sc. 1.), Lord Touchwood even goes so far as to say that he will make Maskwell his heir; and of course Maskwell always prefers Cynthia to Lady Touchwood and uses her merely as a foil. Florise becomes suspicious that Cléon is favoring Valère's marriage; but Cléon calms her and shows her how to put an end to the match. In the last scene of the third act of the English play, Lady Touchwood

<sup>10</sup> Wogue, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

is suspicious of Maskwell because he is betraying his friend; but Maskwell makes love to her and also shows her how to prevent the marriage of the two lovers.

In the third act of the *Méchant*, Ariste warns Valère against Cléon, just as Careless warns Mellefont against Maskwell in the first act of the *Double Dealer*. Letters arrive in which Cléon accuses himself, while Maskwell accuses himself verbally to his friends in order to allay suspicion. Both scenes produce the same effect. From the end of the third act when Valère finds himself desperately in love with Chloé, the situation is the same in both plays. In the next act, Cléon continues his double dealing by defending Ariste to Geronste. He tells Lisette of his love for Chloé, and draws an uncomplimentary picture of Florise, who overhears it while she is concealed in a cabinet. Maskwell, in the third act, says he is tired of Lady Touchwood; and Lord Touchwood informs his wife of this fact, being unaware of the true state of his wife's feelings. His eyes are opened to the real situation by the same dramatic trick of an overheard conversation. In the last act of the *Méchant*, the eyes of Florise are opened; but Geronste will believe nothing in favor of Valère or against Cléon, with whom he now has an understanding, until the French Double Dealer is unmasked. Lord Touchwood, in the same way, will believe nothing good of Mellefont and considers Maskwell his friend until the English Double Dealer is discredited. The two plays have entirely the same outcome.

The English comedy contains many scenes which do not advance the action, but which are merely introduced, according to Congreve's method, for the sake of humor. These scenes naturally do not occur in the French play, which observes the unity of action. The scene in the bed-room, which forms the climax of the *Double Dealer*, is also impossible on the French stage of the period. But the principal characters, the motives actuating them, the main plot, the cool double dealing of the two so-called villains are so strikingly similar that we must conclude that Gresset was consciously influenced

by Congreve to a very great extent. Surely the *Méchant* is the *Double Dealer* in French surroundings.

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### THE DATE OF THE *ENVOY TO BUKTON*

The *Envoy to Bukton* is commonly dated about the end of the year 1396, on the assumption that the closing lines of the fourth stanza—

Experience shal thee teche, so may happe,  
That thee were lever to be take in Fryse  
Than eft to falle of wedding in the trappe—

refer to the expedition of William of Hainault, described by Froissart in the fourth book of the *Chronicles*.<sup>1</sup> So conclusive has this supposed evidence been regarded, that Professor Tatlock, in the latest discussion of the chronological relations of the poem, not only remarks that "the date of *Bukton* may be fixed with great exactness and certainty," but also declares that the date assigned by Professor Skeat "is absolutely and exactly established."<sup>2</sup> I do not wish categorically to assert that the date of *Bukton* is *not* the close of 1396; but I do desire to point out that considerable caution should still be exercised in drawing exact chronological conclusions from the reference to being "take in Fryse."

Professor Kittredge has already made it quite clear<sup>3</sup> that the *Envoy* as a whole must be interpreted in the light of certain literary conventions and may not be taken too seriously as a chapter in Chaucer's autobiography. To the illustrations which he has drawn from

<sup>1</sup> See Skeat, *Oxford Chaucer*, I, 85, 558-59; Tatlock, *Development and Chronology of Chaucer's Works* (Chaucer Soc., 1907), p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Development and Chronology*, p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> *Modern Language Notes*, xxiv, No. 1 (Jan., 1909), pp. 14-15.